

QUOTES FROM BEYOND GOD THE FATHER

by Mary Daly

The expansion of the new space of women's awareness, then, is not an imperialist expansion that pushes back the territory of others. Rather, insofar as it it where being is discovered in confrontation with nothingness, it is an invitation to others to leave the patriarchal space of alienative identity — the sacred circle of eternal return — and enter new space. The Roman church has often "excommunicated" those who disagreed with its dogmas. One woman remarked that the community of sisterhood, which has no hierarchy and no dogmas, involves a process which is the opposite of this. That is, it expands by "incommunication."²⁴ Those who discover the covenant find themselves in the new space. The old territory, then, is not encroached upon: one does not bother to invade non-being. Rather, it is left behind by those who follow the promise within, which is the promise of integrated, transformed, androgynous being. (pp. 168-9)

In the Looking Glass society females, that is, Magnifying Mirrors, play a crucial role. But males have realized that it would serve no good purpose if this were to become known by females, who then might stop looking into the toy mirrors they have been taught to use incessantly. They might then begin looking inside or outside or backward or forward. Instead of settling for the vanity of parakeets they might fall into the sin of pride and refuse to be Magnifying Mirrors any longer. (pp. 196-7)

Genuine love, which is not blindly manipulable by political power of domination, seeks to overcome such power by healing the divided self. Sexist society maintains its grasp over the psyche by keeping it divided against itself. Through stereotyping it harnesses the power of human becoming. It is commonly perceived that on the deepest ontological level love is a striving toward unity, but the implications of this unity have not been understood by the philosophers of patriarchy. It means the becoming of new human beings, brought forth out of the unharnessed energy of psychically androgynous women, whose primary concern is not giving birth to others but to ourselves. (p. 128)

Women may judge that in some cases the names imposed upon reality by male-dominated society and sanctified by religion are basically oppressive and must be rejected. In other instances, it may be that partial truth has been taken for the whole in the past, and that the symbols and conceptualizations that are biased have to be liberated from their partiality. Women will free traditions, thought, and customs only by bearing each other and thus making it possible to speak our word. This involves interaction between insight and praxis, not in the sense of "reflection" upon "social action" (a false dualism) but rather in the sense of a continual growth, flexibility, and emergence of new perceptions of reality — perceptions that come from being where one is. ¹⁶ (pp. 10-11)

Why indeed must 'God' be a noun? Why not a verb — the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn't the naming of 'God' as a noun been an act of murdering the dynamic Verb? And isn't the Verb infinitely more personal than a mere static noun? The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing. Women now who are experiencing the shock of nonbeing and the surge of self-affirmation against this are inclined to perceive transcendence as the Verb in which we participate — live, move and have our being. (pp. 33-34)

Ms. 12/74



BY MARY DALY



y first feminist book, "The Church and the Second Sex," was published in 1968, before the cresting of the second wave of feminism. The writing began in 1965 in a small medieval city, Fribourg, Switzerland, where I lived for seven years. It was completed in 1967 in Boston. It was written with a great

sense of pride, anger, and hope.

In 1971, after a brief, turbulent history, "The Church and the Second Sex" went out of print. It formally died. I tried to "reason" with the publisher that there was a demand for it, pointing out that I had received many letters and telephone calls, especially from women taking or teaching feminist studies, asking why the book wasn't available. But reason, as I had always understood the term, had no effect upon the publishing house patriarchs, who refused to move. So I moved on to other things, including a dramatic/traumatic change of consciousness from "radical Catholic" to postchristian feminist. My graduation from the Catholic church was formalized by a self-conferred diploma, my second feminist book, "Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation," which appeared in 1973. The journey in time/space that took place between the publication dates of the two books could not be described adequately by terrestrial calendars and maps. Experientially, it was hardly even a mere trip to the moon, but more like leapfrogging galaxies in a mind voyage to further and further stars. Several woman-light years

had separated me from "The Church and the Second Sex," whose author I sometimes have trouble recalling.

Then, in 1974, with the imponderable logic that characterizes the Divinities of the Publishing World, the book's publishers informed me of their celestial desire that it appear on earth once again. Oh Goddess: a Second Coming? Startled, I contemplated this new revelation. The Divine Word had been spoken. Now, what response should I give about this strange book and its strange author who had inhabited a distant world? There was of course the biblical answer: "Let it be done according to Thy Word." However, to a postchristian feminist, that hardly seemed an appropriate response. Therefore, I would have to devise some unique solution to the subtle and intriguing problem posed by these Godfathers. What were the possibilities? An updated, revised edition, perhaps? I went to my bookcase and took the book off the shelf. Opening it with a sense of reluctance, I felt as if this were the journal of a half-forgotten foremother, whose quaintness should be understood in historical context and treated with appropriate respect.

Opening the book at random, I found myself in Chapter Seven, "Toward Partnership: Some Modest Proposals." I read a few pages and discovered that the author was proposing that there be equality between men and women in the Church (sic, with capital "C"). Why, I wondered, would anyone want "equality" in the church? In a statement that I had given to the press only three or four woman-light years distant from now, I had explained that a woman's asking for equality in the church would be comparable to a black person's demanding equality in the Ku Klux Klan. How could the author of this



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book have been so obtuse . . . ? But then, the publication date was 1968 A.D. Flipping through a few pages, I noted that the author had used the rather pompous editorial "we" instead of "I," and had written "they" to refer to women, instead of "we." Why did she say "we" when she meant "I," and "they" when she meant "we"? I noted with a sense of embarrassment for her that she used the term "man" as if it were a generic term. I perceived that she had hoped to reform Christianity. Clearly, it would be impossible to "revise" this book in the year 1975 of feminist postchristian time/space (hereafter referred to as A.F., or Anno Feminarum).

What to do? Since the Christian model of resignation to the will of the Proprietor of the Word is dysfunctional in the year 1975 A.F., I considered simply refusing to allow this Second Coming of "The Church and the Second Sex." However, I hesitated at the prospect of such a drastic refusal, partly because women continued to ask for the book. Then another possibility occurred to me: let it become incarnate again, with a new postchristian introduction by myself. The advantages of this last option became apparent, the longer I reflected upon the dilemma posed by time warp. First, since the book is a carefully researched historical record, and since the material it contains is difficult to obtain anywhere else, this Second Coming would make the data available again for those engaged in feminist studies. Second, the book itself is now part of women's history, and as such it is revealing. It represents a stage of thought, feelings, hope, politics that can now be reflected upon from the perspective of new feminist time/space. Since I was, in an earlier incarnation, the author of that book, I am in a unique position to bring it forth again in a new light, to tell its story and then, in the new introduction, to become its critic and reviewer. And so it was the Morning of the Second Daly. I saw that it was a good idea. . . .

As a result of the First Coming of "The Church and the Second Sex" . . . I "lectured" to academic audiences and women's groups across the country about the sexism of the Christian tradition. Often in the late sixties I encountered hostility in women, not toward the patriarchs whose misogyny I exposed, but toward me for exposing them.

By about 1970 this phenomenon of misplaced anger had almost disappeared. More and more people had caught up with the First Daly, and the lines that formerly had elicited hostility brought forth cheers. But the "I" who was then standing before the friendly audiences and tossing out the familiar phrases was already disconnected from the words, already moving through a new time/space. I often heard the old words as though a stranger were speaking them—some personage visiting from the past. My concern was no longer limited to "equality" in the church or anywhere else. I did not really care about unimaginative reform but instead began dreaming new dreams of a women's revolution. This was becoming a credible dream, because a community of sisterhood was coming into being, into be-ing. In the hearing/healing presence of my sisters I had grown ready to try writing/speaking New Words.

The breakthrough to New Words found expression in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, which is excerpted here. In the introduction to that book I explained: "To exist humanly is to name the self, the world, and God. The evolving spiritual consciousness of women is nothing less than this beginning to speak humanly—a reclaiming of the right to name. The liberation of language is rooted in the liberation of ourselves.

"It would be a mistake to imagine that the new speech of women can be equated simply with women speaking men's words. What is happening is that women are really hearing ourselves and each other, and out of this supportive hearing emerge new words."



he biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven, rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will, has dominated the imagination of millions over thousands of years. The symbol of the Father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is in the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated. Within this context a mystification of roles takes place: the husband dominating his wife represents God "himself." . . .

As the Women's Movement begins to have its effect upon the fabric of society, transforming it from patriarchy into something that never existed before, into a diarchal situation that is radically new, it can become the greatest single challenge to the major religions of the world, Western and Eastern—all of which are essentially sexist. Beliefs and values that have held sway for thousands of years will be questioned as never before. This revolution may well be also the greatest single hope for survival of spiritual consciousness on this planet.

THE CHALLENGE: EMERGENCE OF WHOLE HUMAN BEINGS



here are some who persist in claiming that the liberation of women will only mean that new characters will assume the same old roles, and that nothing will change essentially in structures, ideologies, and values. This supposition is often based on the observation that the very few women in "masculine" occupations often behave much as men do. This kind of reasoning is not at all to the point, for it fails to take into account the fact that tokenism does not

Editors' Note: The passages included here have been excerpted from Chapter One of *Beyond God the Father*; for further development of these sections, see the book.

From *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, by Mary Daly. Copyright © 1973 by Mary Daly, reprinted here by permission of the publisher, Beacon Press (Boston).

change stereotypes or social systems but works to preserve them, since it dulls the revolutionary impulse. The minute proportion of women in the United States who occupy such roles (such as congresswomen, judges, business executives, doctors, and so on) have been trained by men in institutions defined and designed by men, and they have been pressured subtly to operate according to male rules. There are no alternate models. . . .

What is to the point is an emergence of woman-consciousness such as has never before taken place. It is unimaginative and out of touch with what is happening in the Women's Movement to assume that the becoming of women will simply mean uncritical acceptance of structures, beliefs, symbols, norms, and patterns of behavior that have been given priority by society under male domination. Rather, this becoming will act as catalyst for radical change in our culture. . . . What can effect basic alteration in the system is a potent influence *from without*. Women who reject patriarchy have this power and indeed are this power of transformation that is ultimately threatening to things as they are.

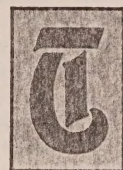
The roles and structures of patriarchy have been developed and sustained in accordance with an artificial polarization of human qualities into the traditional sexual stereotypes. The image of the person in authority and the accepted understanding of "his" role has corresponded to the eternal masculine stereotype, which implies hyper-rationality (in reality, frequently reducible to pseudorationality), "objectivity," aggressivity, the possession of dominating and manipulative attitudes toward persons and the environment, and the tendency to construct boundaries between the self (and those identified with the self) and "the Other." The caricature of human being which is represented by this stereotype depends for its existence upon the opposite caricature—the eternal feminine. This implies hyperemotionalism, passivity, self-abnegation, and so on.

By becoming whole persons women can generate a counterforce to the stereotype of the leader, challenging the artificial polarization of human characteristics into sex-role identification. There is no reason to assume that women who have the support of each other to criticize not only the feminine stereotype but the masculine stereotype as well will simply adopt the latter as a model for ourselves. On the contrary, what is happening is that women are developing a wider range of qualities and skills. This is beginning to encourage and in fact demand a comparably liberating process in men—a phenomenon which has begun in men's liberation groups and which is taking place every day within the context of personal relationships. The becoming of androgynous human persons implies a radical change in the fabric of human consciousness and in styles of human behavior.

This change is already threatening the credibility of the religious symbols of our culture. Since many of these have been used to justify oppression, such a challenge should be seen as redemptive. Religious symbols fade and die when the cultural situation that gave rise to them and

supported them ceases to give them plausibility. Such an event generates anxiety, but it is part of the risk involved in a faith which accepts the relativity of all symbols and recognizes that clinging to these as fixed and ultimate is self-destructive and idolatrous. . . .

BEYOND THE INADEQUATE GOD



he various theologies that . . . in one way or another objectify "God" as a being, thereby attempt in a self-contradictory way to envisage transcendent reality as finite. "God" then functions to legitimate the existing social, economic, and political status quo, in which women and other victimized groups are subordinate.

"God" can be used oppressively against women in a number of ways. First, it occurs in an overt manner when the theologians proclaim women's subordination to be God's will. . . .

Second, even in the absence of such explicitly oppressive justification, the phenomenon is present when one-sex symbolism for God and for the human relationship to God is used. The following passage from Gregory Baum's *Man Becoming* illustrates the point:

To believe that God is Father is to become aware of oneself not as a stranger, not as an outsider or an alienated person, but as a son who belongs or a person appointed to a marvelous destiny, which he shares with the whole community. To believe that God is Father means to be able to say "we" in regard to all men.

A woman whose consciousness has been aroused can say that such language makes her aware of herself as a stranger, as an outsider, as an alienated person, not as a daughter who belongs or who is appointed to a marvelous destiny. She cannot belong to this without assenting to her own lobotomy.

Third, even when the basic assumptions of God-language appear to be nonexistent, and when language is somewhat purified of fixation upon maleness, it is damaging and implicitly compatible with sexism if it encourages detachment from the reality of the human struggle against oppression in its concrete manifestations. . . .

The new insight of women is bringing us to a point beyond such direct and indirect theological oppressiveness that traditionally has centered around discussions of "God." It is becoming clear that if God-language is even implicitly compatible with oppressiveness, failing to make clear the relation between intellection and liberation, then it will either have to be developed in such a way that it becomes explicitly relevant to the problem of sexism or else dismissed. . . . In my thinking, the specific criterion which implies a mandate to reject certain forms of God-talk is expressed in the question: Does this language hinder human becoming by reinforcing sex-role socialization? Expressed positively—the question is: Does it encourage human becoming

toward psychological and social fulfillment, toward an androgynous mode of living, toward transcendence? . . .

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND REVELATORY COURAGE



any questions that are of burning importance to women now simply have not occurred in the past (and to a large extent in the present) to those with "credentials" to do theology. Other questions may have been voiced timidly but quickly squelched as stupid, irrelevant, or naïve. Therefore, attempts by women theologians now merely to "update" or to reform theology within acceptable patterns of question-asking are not likely to get very far.

Moreover, within the context of the prevailing social climate it has been possible for scholars to be aware of the most crudely dehumanizing texts concerning women in the writings of religious "authorities" and theologians—from Augustine to Aquinas, to Luther, to Knox, to Barth—and at the same time to treat their unverified opinions on far more imponderable matters with utmost reverence and respect. That is, the blatant misogyny of these men has not been the occasion of a serious credibility gap even for those who have disagreed on this "point." It has simply been ignored or dismissed as trivial. By contrast, in the emerging consciousness of women this context is beginning to be perceived in its full significance and as deeply relevant to the world view in which such "authorities" have seen other seemingly unrelated subjects, such as the problem of God. Hence the present awakening of the hitherto powerless sex demands an explosion of creative imagination that can withstand the disapproval of orthodoxy and overreach the boundaries cherished by conventional minds.

The driving revelatory force that is making it possible for women to speak—and to hear each other speak—more authentically about God is courage in the face of the risks that attend the liberation process. Since the projections of patriarchal religion have been blocking the dynamics of existential courage by offering the false security of alienation, that is, of self-reduction in sex roles, there is reason to hope for the emergence of a new religious consciousness in the confrontation with sexism that is now in its initial stages. The becoming of women may be not only the doorway to deliverance which secular humanism has passionately fought for—but also a doorway to something, that is, a new phase in the human spirit's quest for God.

This becoming who we really are requires existential courage to confront the experience of nothingness. All human beings are threatened by nonbeing. . . . I am suggesting that at this point in history women are in a unique sense called to be the bearers of existential courage in society.

People attempt to overcome the threat of nonbeing by denying the self. The outcome of this is ironic: that which is dreaded triumphs, for we are caught in the self-

contradictory bind of shrinking our being to avoid nonbeing. The only alternative is self-actualization in spite of the ever-present nothingness. Part of the problem is that people, women in particular, who are seemingly incapable of a high degree of self-actualization have been made such by societal structures that are products of human attempts to create security. Those who are alienated from their own deepest identity do receive a kind of security in return for accepting very limited and undifferentiated identities. The woman who single-mindedly accepts the role of "housewife," for example, may to some extent avoid the experience of nothingness but she also avoids a fuller participation in being, which would be her only real security and source of community. Submerged in such a role, she cannot achieve a breakthrough to creativity. Many strong women are worn out in the struggle to break out of these limits before reaching the higher levels of intellectual discovery or of creativity.

The beginning of a breakthrough means a realization that there is an existential conflict between the self and structures that have given such crippling security. This requires confronting the shock of nonbeing with the courage to be. It means facing the nameless anxieties of fate, which become concretized in loss of jobs, friends, social approval, health, and even life itself. Also involved is anxiety of guilt over refusing to do what society demands, a guilt which can hold one in its grip long after it has been recognized as false. Finally, there is the anxiety of meaninglessness, which can be overwhelming at times when the old simple meanings, role definitions, and life expectations have been rooted out and rejected openly and one emerges into a world without models.

This confrontation with the anxiety of nonbeing is revelatory, making possible the relativization of structures that are seen as human products, and therefore not absolute and ultimate. It drives consciousness beyond fixation upon "things as they are." Courage to be is the key to the revelatory power of the feminist revolution.

With the rise of feminism, women have come to see the necessity of conflict, of letting rage surface and of calling forth a will to liberation. Yet, partially because there is such an essential contrast between feminism and patriarchal religion's destructive symbols and values, and partially because women's lives are intricately bound up with those of men—biologically, emotionally, socially, and professionally—it is clear that Women's Liberation is essentially linked with full human liberation.

Women generally can see very well that the Movement will self-destruct if we settle for vengeance. The more imminent danger, then, is that some women will seek premature reconciliation, not allowing themselves to see the depth and implications of feminism's essential opposition to sexist society. It can be easy to leap on the bandwagon of "human liberation" without paying the price in terms of polarization, tensions, risk, and pain that the ultimate objective of real human liberation demands. . . .

(continued on page 96)

GOD IS A VERB
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

WHY SPEAK
ABOUT "GOD"?



It might seem that the women's revolution should just go about its business of generating a new consciousness, without worrying about God. I suggest that the fallacy involved in this would be an overlooking of a basic question that is implied in human existence and that the pitfall in such an oversight is cutting off the radical potential of the Movement itself.

It is reasonable to take the position that sustained effort toward self-transcendence requires keeping alive in one's consciousness the question of ultimate transcendence, that is, of God. It implies recognition of the fact that we have no power *over* the ultimately real, and that whatever authentic power we have is derived from *participation* in ultimate reality. This awareness, always hard to sustain, makes it possible to be free of idolatry even in regard to one's own cause, since it tells us that all presently envisaged goals, lifestyles, symbols, and societal structures may be transitory. This is the meaning that the question of God should have for liberation, sustaining a

"GOD'S PLAN" IS OFTEN A COVER FOR INADEQUACY ... AND EVIL.

concern that is really open to the future, in other words, that is really ultimate. Such a concern will not become fixated upon limited objectives.

Feminists in the past have in a way been idolatrous about such objectives as the right to vote. Indeed, this right is due to women in justice and it is entirely understandable that feminists' energies were drained by the efforts needed to achieve even such a modicum of justice. But from the experience of such struggles we are in a position now to distrust token victories within a societal and structural framework that renders them almost meaningless. The new wave of feminism desperately needs to be not only many-faceted but cosmic and ultimately religious in its vision. This means reaching outward and inward toward the God beyond and beneath the gods who have stolen our identity.

The idea that human beings are "to the image of God" is an intuition whose implications could hardly be worked through under patriarchal conditions. If it is true that human beings have projected "God" in their own image, it is also true that we can evolve beyond the projec-

tions of earlier stages of consciousness. It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God. As the essential victims of the archaic God-projections, women can bring this process of creativity into a new phase. This involves iconoclasm—the breaking of idols. Even—and perhaps especially—through the activity of its most militantly atheistic and a-religious members, the Movement is smashing images that obstruct the becoming of the image of God. The basic idol-breaking will be done on the level of internalized images of male superiority, on the plane of exorcising them from consciousness and from the cultural institutions that breed them. . . .

One of the false deities to be dethroned is the God of explanation, or "God as a stopgap for the incompleteness of our knowledge," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "him." This serves sometimes as the legitimation of . . . such anomic [purposeless] occurrences as the suffering of a child. Such phenomena are "explained" as being God's will. So also are socially prevailing inequalities of power and privilege, by a justifying process which easily encourages masochistic attitudes. Clearly, this deity does not encourage commitment to the task of analyzing and eradicating the social, economic, and psychological roots of suffering. As marginal beings who are coming into awareness, women are in a situation to see that "God's plan" is often a front for men's plans and a cover for inadequacy, ignorance, and evil. Our vantage point offers opportunities for dislodging this deity from its revered position on the scale of human delusions.

Another idol is the God of otherworldliness. The most obvious face of this deity in the past has been that of the Judge whose chief activity consists in rewarding and punishing after death. As Simone de Beauvoir indicated, women have been the major consumers of this religious product. Since there has been so little self-realization possible by the female sex "in this life," it was natural to focus attention on the next. As mass consumers of this image, women have the power to remove it from the market, mainly by living full lives here and now. I do not mean to advocate a mere re-utterance of the "secularization" theology that was so popular in the sixties. . . . If women can sustain the courage essential to liberation, this can give rise to a deeper "otherworldliness"—an awareness that the process of creating a counterworld to the counterfeit "this world" presented to consciousness by the societal structures that oppress us is participation in eternal life. . . .

A third idol, intimately related to those described above, is the God who is the Judge of "sin," who confirms the rightness of the rules and roles of the reigning system, maintaining false consciences and self-destructive guilt feelings. Women have suffered both mentally and physically from this deity, in whose name we have been informed that birth control and abortion are unequivocally wrong, that we should be subordinate to husbands, that we must be present at rituals and services in which men have all the leadership roles and in which we are degraded not only by enforced passivity but also verbally and symbolically. Although this is most blatant in the arch-conservative religions, the God who imposes

false guilt is hardly absent from liberal Protestantism and Judaism, where his presence is more subtle. Women's growth in self-respect will deal the deathblow to this as well as to the other demons dressed as Gods.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AS SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

I have indicated that because the becoming of women involves a radical encounter with nothingness, it bears with it a new surge of ontological [concerning the nature and relations of being] hope. This hope is essentially active. The passive hope that has been so prevalent in the history of religious attitudes corresponds to the objectified God from whom one may anticipate favors. Within that frame of reference, human beings have tried to relate to ultimate reality as an object to be known, cajoled, manipulated. The tables are turned, however, for the objectified "God" has a way of reducing "his" producers to objects who lack capacity for autonomous action. In contrast to this, the God who is power of being acts as a moral power summoning women and men to act out of our deepest hope and to become who we can be . . .

This hope is communal rather than merely individualistic, because it is grounded in the two-edged courage to be. That is, it is hope coming from the experience of individuation and participation. It drives beyond the objectified God that is imagined as limited in benevolence, bestowing blessing upon "his" favorites. The power of being is that in which all finite beings participate, but not on a "one-to-one" basis, since this power is in all, while transcending all. Communal hope involves in some manner a profound interrelationship with other finite beings, human and nonhuman. Ontological communal hope, then, is cosmic. Its essential dynamic is directed to the universal community.

Finally, ontological hope is revolutionary. Since the insight in which it is grounded is the double-edged intuition of nonbeing and of being, it extends beyond the superstitious fixations of technical reason. The latter when it is cut off from the intuitive knowledge of ontological reason cannot get beyond superstition. The rising consciousness that women are experiencing of our dehumanized situation has the power to turn attention around from the projections of our culture to the radically threatened human condition. Insofar as women are true to this consciousness, we have to be the most radical of revolutionaries, since the superstition revealed to us is omnipresent and plagues even the other major revolutionary movements of our time. Knowing that a black or white, Marxist or Capitalist, countercultural or bourgeois male chauvinist deity (human or divine) will not differ essentially from his opposite, women will be forced in a dramatic way to confront the most haunting of human questions, the question of God. This confrontation may not find its major locus within the theological academy or the institutional churches and it may not always express itself in recognizable theological or philosophical language. However, there is a dynamism in

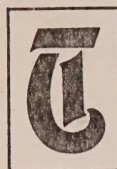
the ontological affirmation of self that reaches out toward the nameless God. In hearing and naming ourselves out of the depths, women are naming toward God, which is what theology always should have been about. Unfortunately, it tended to stop at fixing names upon God, which deafened us to our own potential for self-naming.

THE UNFOLDING OF GOD

It has sometimes been argued that anthropomorphic symbols for "God" are important and even necessary because the fundamental powers of the cosmos otherwise are seen as impersonal. One of the insights characteristic of the rising woman-consciousness is that this kind of dichotomizing between cosmic power and the personal need not be. That is, it is not necessary to anthropomorphize or to reify transcendence in order to relate to this personally. In fact, the process is demonic in some of its consequences. The dichotomizing-reifying-projecting syndrome has been characteristic of patriarchal consciousness, making "the Other" the repository of the contents of the lost self. Since women are now beginning to recognize in ourselves the victims of such dichotomizing processes, the insight extends to other manifestations of the pathological splitting-off of reality into falsely conceived opposites.

Why indeed must "God" be a noun? Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all? Hasn't the naming of "God" as a noun been an act of murdering that dynamic Verb? And isn't the Verb infinitely more personal than a mere static noun? The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing. Women now who are experiencing the shock of nonbeing and the surge of self-affirmation against this are inclined to perceive transcendence as the Verb in which we participate—live, move, and have our being.

This Verb—the Verb of Verbs—is intransitive. It need not be conceived as having an object that limits its dynamism. That which it is over against is nonbeing. Women in the process of liberation are enabled to perceive this because our liberation consists in refusing to be "the Other" and asserting instead "I am"—without making another "the Other." Unlike Sartre's "us versus a third" (the closest approximation to love possible in his world), the new sisterhood is saying "us versus non-being." When Sartre wrote that "man [sic] fundamentally is the desire to be God," he was saying that the most radical passion of human life is to be a God who does not and cannot exist. The ontological hope of which I am speaking is neither this self-deification nor the simplistic reified images often lurking behind such terms as "Creator," "Lord," "Judge," that Sartre rightly rejects. It transcends these because its experiential basis is courageous participation in being. . . . It enables us to break out of this prison of subjectivity because it implies commitment together. . . .

NEW SPACE:
NEW TIME

he unfolding of God, then, is an event in which women participate as we participate in our own revolution. The process involves the creation of new space, in which women are free to become who we are, in which there are real and significant alternatives to the prefabricated identities provided within the enclosed spaces of patriarchal institutions. As opposed to the foreclosed identity allotted to us within those spaces, there is a diffused identity—an open road to discovery of the self and of each other.

The new space is located always "on the boundary." Its center is on the boundary of patriarchal institutions, such as churches, universities, national and international politics, families. Its center is the lives of women whose experience of becoming changes the very meaning of center for us by putting it on the boundary of all that has been considered central. . . .

The new space, then, has a kind of invisibility to those who have not entered it. It is therefore inviolable. At the same time it communicates power which, paradoxically, is experienced both as power of presence and power of absence. It is not political power in the usual sense but rather a flow of healing energy which is participation in the power of being. For women who are becoming conscious, that participation is made possible initially by casting off the role of "the Other" which is the nothingness imposed by a sexist world. The burst of anger and creativity made possible in the presence of one's sisters is an experience of becoming whole, of overcoming the division within the self that makes nothingness block the dynamism of being. Instead of settling for being a warped half of a person, which is equivalent to a self-destructive non-person, the emerging woman is casting off role definitions and moving toward androgynous being. This is not a mere "becoming equal to men in a man's world"—which would mean settling for footing within the patriarchal space. It is, rather, something like God speaking forth God-self in the new identity of women. While life in the new space may be "dangerous" in that it means living without the securities offered by the patriarchal system for docility to its rules, it offers a deeper security that can absorb the risks that such living demands. This safety is participation in being, as opposed to inauthenticity, alienation, non identity—in a word, nonbeing.

The power of presence that is experienced by those who have begun to live in the new space radiates outward, attracting others. For those who are fixated upon patriarchal space it apparently is threatening. Indeed this sense of threat is frequently expressed. For those who are thus threatened, the presence of women to each other is experienced as an absence. Such women are no longer empty receptacles to be used as "the Other," and are no longer internalizing the projections that cut off the flow of being. Men who need such projection screens ex-

perience the power of absence of such "objects" and are thrown into the situation of perceiving nothingness. . . .

Women's confrontation with the experience of nothingness invites men to confront it also. Many of course respond with hostility. The hostility may be open or, in some cases, partially disguised both from the men who are exercising it and from the women to whom it is directed. When disguised, it often takes seductive forms, such as invitations to "dialogue" under conditions psychologically loaded against the woman, or invitations to a quick and easy "reconciliation" without taking seriously the problems raised. Other men react with disguised hostility in the form of being "the feminist's friend," not in the sense of really hearing women but as paternalistic supervisors, analysts, or "spokesmen" for the Movement. Despite many avenues of nonauthentic response to the threat of women's power of absence, some men do accept the invitation to confront the experience of nothingness that offers itself when "the Other" ceases to be "the Other" and stands back to say "I am." In so doing men begin to liberate themselves toward wholeness, toward androgynous being. This new participation in the power of being becomes possible for men when women move into the new space.

Entry into the new space whose center is on the boundary of the institutions of patriarchy also involves entry into new time. To be caught up in these institutions is to be living in time past. . . . By contrast, when women live on the boundary, we are vividly aware of living in time present/future. Participation in the unfolding of God means also this time breakthrough, which is a continuing (but not ritually "repeated") process. The center of the new time is on the boundary of patriarchal time. What it is, in fact, is women's own time. It is our life-time. It is whenever we are living out of our own sense of reality, refusing to be possessed, conquered, and alienated by the linear, measured-out, quantitative time of the patriarchal system. Women, in becoming who we are, are living in a qualitative, organic time that escapes the measurements of the system. For example, women who sit in institutional committee meetings without surrendering to the purposes and goals set forth by the male-dominated structure, are literally working on our own time while perhaps appearing to be working "on company time." The center of our activities is organic, in such a way that events are more significant than clocks. This boundary living is a way of being in and out of "the system." It entails a refusal of false clarity. Essentially it is being alive now, which in its deepest dimension is participation in the unfolding of God.

Mary Daly, who holds doctorates in philosophy and theology, is an associate professor at Boston College, where she teaches feminist courses. She is presently writing a new book on feminist ethics. Both of her feminist books are in paperback: *"The Church and the Second Sex: With a New Autobiographical Preface and Postchristian Introduction by the Author"* (Harper Colophon, \$2.95); *"Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation"* (Beacon Press, \$3.95).

SEXISM

THE END OF GOD THE FATHER

*A little castration is called for if we are ever to get
away from phallus-centered faith*

From The Unitarian
Universalist Christ

By Mary Daly

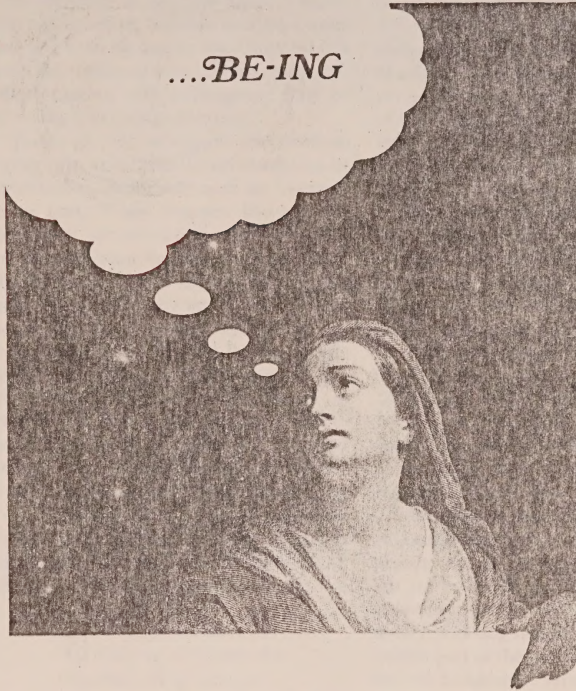
I am convinced that there exists a worldwide sexual caste system masked by sex-role segregation. This caste system is masked also by women's duality of status, for women have a derivative status stemming from relationships with men, which tends to hide our infrahuman condition as women. It is also hidden by ideologies and institutions that alienate women from our true selves.

Patriarchal religion has made it more difficult to see through the injustices of the system by legitimating and reinforcing it. The misogyny of the church fathers—e.g., Tertullian, who informed women in general: "You are the devil's gateway," or Augustine, who opined that women are not made to the image of God—is well known. The same attitudes prevail in our own time. Karl Barth proclaimed that woman is ontologically subordinate to man. The symbols and the entire conceptual apparatus of Christian theology, developed under patriarchy, are the products of males and serve the interests of sexist society.

Other axioms in my present thinking are fundamental. I think that the bonding phenomenon among women, generally referred to as sisterhood, has deeply spiritual dimensions. This spiritual quality of the women's revolution is grounded in our confrontation with nonbeing. As the ultimate aliens, perennial outsiders in "a man's world," women are beginning to experience nothingness—to see that the entire social and language structure essentially excludes us as fully human beings. We now recognize ourselves as marginal, and this recognition requires existential courage.

Sisterhood, I believe, is both revolutionary and revelatory. I am concerned here with the problem of how the women's revolution can transform Western spiritual consciousness, its symbols and its values. This transformation points

...BE-ING



For ID collage by Joan Hall

beyond the idolatries of sexist religion and society and sparks creative action toward transcendence. This fundamental impulse to which the women's movement is giving expression has to do with the search for ultimate meaning and reality, which some would call God.

Theology oppresses women in a number of ways. First, it may be overtly and explicitly oppressive, proclaiming women's subordination as God's will. Second, it oppresses when exclusively masculine symbolism for God, for divine incarnation and for the human ideal reinforces sexual hierarchy. Third, even when its basic assumptions seem not to be sexist and when its language is somewhat purified of fixation upon maleness, theology is damaging if it fails to confront the concrete manifestations of oppression.

The method I propose for dealing with questions of religious symbols and concepts and with ethical problems does not suppose some unique and changeless revelation peculiar to Christianity. My approach is not that of a disinterested ob-

server; nor is it an attempt to correlate with the existing cultural situation "external truths" that are presumed to have been captured as adequately as possible in a fixed and limited set of symbols.

The method requires one of liberation. In order to understand its implications, one must understand that women have not been free to use our own power to name ourselves the world or God. The "method" of the evolving spiritual consciousness of women is nothing less than a reclaiming of the right to name.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the speech of women can be equated simply with women speaking in words. What is happening is that women are hearing each other and ourselves for the first time, and

this supportive hearing emerges in words. Words that, materially speaking, are identical with the old become new in a semantic context that emerges in qualitatively new experience. Thus the word "sisterhood," wrenched from patriarchal context, no longer means subordinate semibrotherhood but authentic bonding of women.

This liberation of language implies breakthrough to new semantic fields. The new semantic context has its own verification in the rising spiritual consciousness women have of ourselves of our situation. The method of liberation, then, involves castrating language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world. It castrates in the sense of cutting away phallus-centered value system imposed by patriarchy. The cutting away amounts to an exorcism that must be done by women, who experience the destructive of the superphallic society, the great "God-Father" that indulges universally in the politics of

It has sometimes been argued that

thropomorphic symbols for "God" are important and even necessary because the fundamental powers of the cosmos otherwise are seen as impersonal. One of the insights of the "rising woman consciousness" is that one need not anthropomorphize or objectify transcendence in order to relate to it personally. Objectifying has been characteristic of patriarchal consciousness, making "the Other" the repository of the contents of the lost self. Since women are now beginning to recognize ourselves as the victims of objectifying and dichotomizing, the insight extends to other manifestations of the pathological splitting up of reality into falsely conceived opposites. Why must "God" be a noun? Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all—infinately more personal than a static noun? The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing. Women experiencing the shock of nonbeing and the surge of self-affirmation tend to perceive transcendence as the Verb in which we participate—live, move and have our being.

This Verb is intransitive. It has no object to limit its dynamism. It moves against nonbeing. Women in the process of liberation are able to perceive this because our liberation consists in refusing to be "the Other" and asserting instead "I am"—without making another "the Other." The unfolding of the woman consciousness is an intimation of the endless unfolding of God.

The unfolding of God is an event in which women participate as we participate in our own revolution. The process involves the creation of new space, in which we are free to become who we are, creating alternatives to prefabricated identities. The new space is located always "on the boundary." Its center is on the boundary of patriarchal institutions. Its center is the lives of women.

The new space is invisible to those who have not entered it and therefore inviolable. Yet it communicates power that, paradoxically, is experienced both as power of presence and power of absence. The flow of energy, anger and creativity, which is participation in the power of being, overcomes the nothingness blocking the dynamism of being. This power of presence attracts others. Those fixated on patriarchal space experience the presence of women in our own space as an absence. Women are no longer empty receptacles to be used as "the Other," and men who need such receptacles ex-

perience the power of absence of such "objects" and perceive nothingness. Sometimes the absence of women is physical. Sometimes it is noncooperation, refusal to "play the game." This hints at the presence of another space women have gone off to, and the would-be users are left with no one to use, thrown back into their sense of nothingness. Women's confrontation with nothingness thus invites men to confront it too.

Entry into the new space also involves entry into new time. To be caught up in patriarchal institutions is to be living in time past. When women live on the boundary, we are vividly aware of living in time present/future, our own time. The breakthrough to organic time comes whenever we are living out of our own sense of reality, refusing to be possessed, conquered and alienated by the linear, measured out, quantitative time of the patriarchal system. Women who sit in committee meetings without surrendering to the goals of the male-dominated structure are literally working on our own time while appearing to be working "on company time." Events are more real than clocks. Boundary living is being in and out of "the system." It is being alive *now*, which is participation in the

A male figure cannot
liberate us from the
original sin of sexism

unfolding of God.

When women, energized by rage, move out of patriarchal space and time, there is a surge of new life. I analyze this as participation in God the Verb that cannot be broken down into past, present and future time, since it is a form-destroying, form-creating, transforming power that makes all things new.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote: "Take the snake, the fruit-tree and the woman from the tableau, and we have no fall . . . hence no need of a Savior. Thus the bottom falls out of the whole Christian theology."

This shows the key role of the myth of feminine evil as a foundation for the entire structure of phallic Christian ideology. This myth takes on cosmic proportions when the male's viewpoint is metamorphosed into God's viewpoint. Assurance of divine disapproval of women enabled Christianity to perpetuate its scapegoat psychology.

Out of the rising woman consciousness is coming a realization that patriarchal religion's treatment of the mystery of

evil has been out of focus and that therefore its deepest dimensions have never been really confronted. Since the mystery of evil has been dislocated in patriarchal religious consciousness, it is logical to ask whether the Christian "solution" suffers from a comparable and consequent dislocation. I suggest that the idea of a divine incarnation in a uniquely male savior can be seen now as a perpetuation of the "original sin" rather than as salvation. I propose that Christianity itself should be castrated by cutting away the products of supermale arrogance: the myths of sin and salvation that are simply two symptoms of the same disease.

Under the conditions of patriarchy, liberating the human race from the original sin of sexism is precisely the role that a male symbol *cannot* perform. The idea of salvation by a male savior perpetuates the problem of patriarchal oppression. Those who would argue that the Christ symbol can be used oppressively but need not be used that way should ponder the message the unique maleness of the symbol itself conveys.

Women are perceiving that patriarchal religion *is* patriarchal and are giving priority to our own experience. There are no adequate models in the past to guide us in our present situation. We are in fact breaking models. It seems to have been a part of the patriarchal mind-set to imitate a master or father figure with an almost blind devotion and then to reject it in order to be oneself. But women living in the new space, where freedom is in the air, spark in others existential courage to affirm their own unique being.

As the idea of "model" is torn free from the male context, women call forth in each other the courage to enter the exodus community. "Exodus," too, we are beginning to hear with new ears. It means going *away* from the land of our fathers. We are going away because of a promise. The promise is not handed down by a God-Father but is something that we recognize in ourselves and in each other. It is the unfulfilled potentiality of our *foremothers*, whose largely unrecorded history we are now assuming into our present/future. It is in our potentiality that we are finding it. In finding it we are participating in the Verb Who is the most active of all verbs. ♀

Mary Daly, associate professor of theology at Boston College and author of *The Church and the Second Sex*, develops these ideas further in her forthcoming book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Beacon Press, 1973).

